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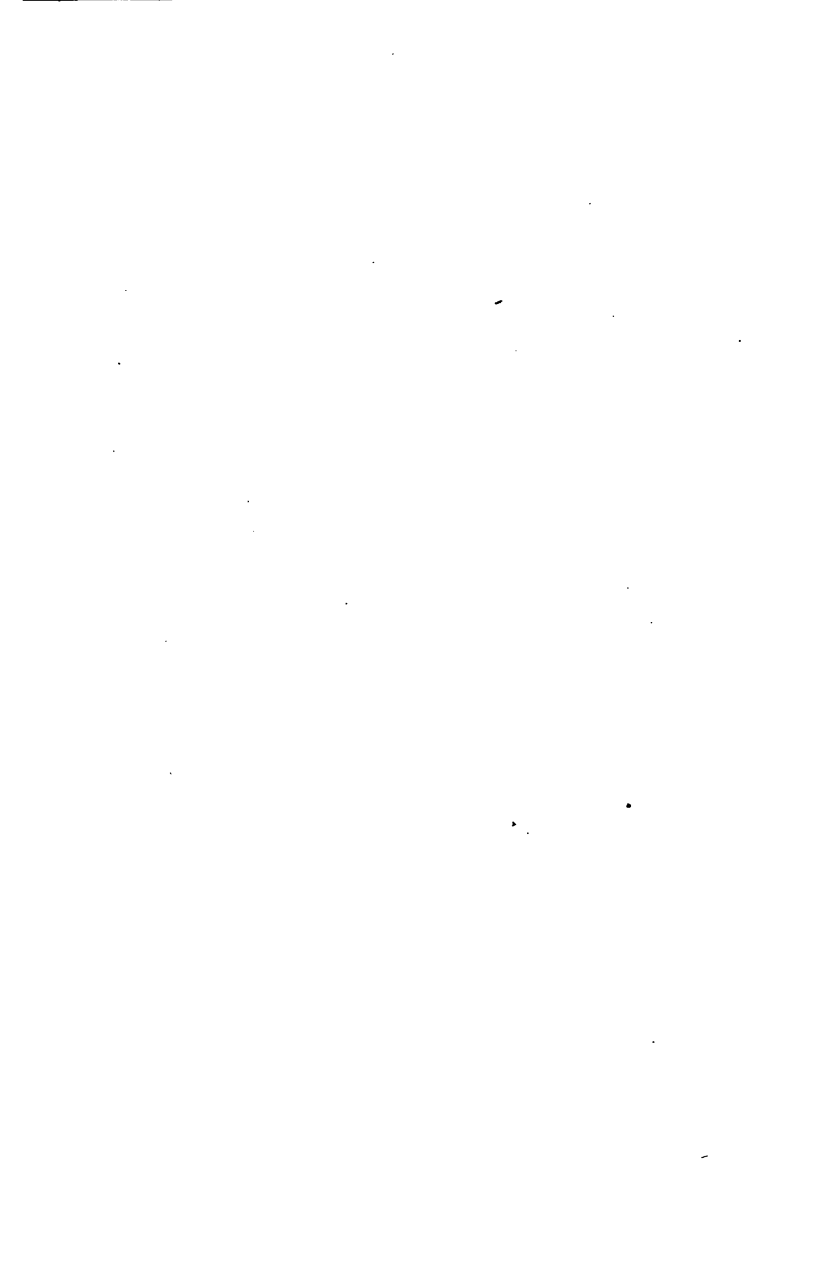
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ΑΚΡΟΓΥΝΗ



ΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ.





THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE
OF
THE ATONEMENT
AND
ITS PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM

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CHAPTER I.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE ATONEMENT.

THE Atonement is the divine answer to the cry which for thousands of years has been going up from the human heart imploring deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. The cry itself is prompted by one of the most deeply-rooted instincts of our common nature, and it will rest satisfied with nothing short of the full and free salvation which is given through Jesus Christ.

In speaking thus, however, we must not shut our eyes to the objections which have been urged against the particular method by which this deliverance is commonly held to have been effected.

And first, it is argued that the Atonement is merely a superfluous means for the forgiveness of sins, which God is always ready to forgive simply on the sinner's own confession and amendment.

And further, it is objected in still stronger terms that the scheme of deliverance propounded in the

doctrine of the Atonement is not merely superfluous but in the highest degree revolting to all our notions of justice. Thus one writer¹ speaks of 'the strangely inconsistent doctrine that God is so just that He could not let sin go unpunished, yet so unjust that He could punish it in the person of the innocent.' 'It is,' he says, 'for orthodox dialectics to explain how the divine justice can be impugned by pardoning the guilty and yet vindicated by punishing the innocent.' And another writer² says, 'The moral perfection of God being assumed as a postulate in the very idea of a Revelation, no system of religion which contradicts it can be admitted as credible on any terms. But the doctrine of the Atonement involves a plain denial of God's moral excellence. Theologians speak as if there were some crime or at least some weakness in the clemency which freely receives a repentant creature into favour. . . . But how is the alleged immorality of letting off the sinner mended by *the added crime of penally crushing the sinless?* Of what man, of what angel could such a thing be reported without raising a cry of indignant shame from the universal human heart? What should we think of a judge

¹ Gregg, 'Creed of Christendom,' p. 243.

² J. Martineau, 'Studies of Christianity,' p. 186.

who should discharge the felons from the prisons of a city because some noble and generous citizen offered himself to the executioner instead?' I commenced with representing the Atonement as the divine answer to the cry which is always going up from the heart of man for deliverance from its sins. Here, on the contrary, in the objections just stated there is an appeal made to the same heart of man for the rejection of the doctrine of the Atonement, on the ground of its inconsistency with our notions of justice.

As regards the first of these two objections, it must be freely acknowledged, whatever some theologians may have maintained to the contrary, that God is always ready to forgive sinners on their true repentance, though it is well here to insist upon the full significance of the word repentance, to which the world in general attaches so little meaning, simply because it is so little alive to the true nature of sin, and so little conscious of its own sins of which it has to repent. Few, very few at the present day, are found to re-echo the words of the Psalmist, 'My wickednesses are gone over my head and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear' (Ps. xxxviii. 4); 'My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am

not able to look up' (Ps. xl. 15); or in the still more bitter cry of the Apostle, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?' (Rom. vii. 24). And if we felt, as we ought to do, the full weight of our sins, we should talk less freely than we do of repentance as the means of saving us from our sins.

To proceed however with our subject, we can have no doubt that God's readiness to forgive sinners on their true repentance is again and again insisted on in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments. 'I said I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin' (Ps. xxxii. 6). 'The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (Ps. li. 17). And in our Lord's own parable we read that no sooner did the prodigal arise and go to his father, with the confession of sin ready upon his lips, than 'his father saw him whilst he was yet a great way off, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him' (Luke xv. 20). Whether indeed the forgiveness thus readily obtained was no more than the returning prodigal could have claimed for himself on the ground of mere justice may be very open to question. Anyhow, it is here represented

in the light, not of the judge's acquittal of a criminal upon his confession and amendment, but of the free outpouring of a father's love.

Again, if from the parable just referred to we turn back to that of the lost sheep, which precedes it, we shall find its recovery ascribed, not to any search which the sheep of its own accord makes after the fold from which it had strayed, but to the care bestowed upon it by the shepherd (Luke xv. 4) ; so that whilst we fully acknowledge the power of true repentance to obtain forgiveness of sins at the hands of a merciful God, we have still to ask how much of this repentance is due to the action of the sinner himself and how much to the active exertion on his behalf of One who is described by the Apostle Peter as having been exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and Saviour *to give repentance* and remission of sins (Acts v. 31), and who speaks of Himself as having come 'to seek and save that which was lost' (Luke xix. 10), and who it may be, as in the case of the lost sheep, is most active in bestowing His help upon us at times when we ourselves are quite unconscious of receiving it. And lastly, granting that the announcement of God's readiness to forgive sinners on their repentance has been the means, under

God's blessing, of saving its thousands, yet most assuredly the Gospel proclamation of the sinner's forgiveness, owing to what Jesus Christ has done for him, has been the means of saving its tens and hundreds of thousands. It has lifted a heavy weight from off the backs of the most sincere yet humble penitents, who but for this most gracious assurance that the Gospel holds out to them and brings home to their hearts, would at least have walked wearily and despondently all their days, even if they did not altogether sink under the weight of the burden from which they felt their own powerlessness to shake themselves free.

The second of the two objections stated above is easily disposed of. Its removal, however, will be found to disclose a real difficulty in the doctrine of the Atonement, to which accordingly we shall have to direct our serious attention.

In the first place, then, whatever may have been the precise character of Jesus Christ's sufferings, there can be no question that the readiness with which He submitted Himself to them forms a most essential feature of the Atonement. 'Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us' (1 John iii. 16). 'The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep' (John x. 11). 'No man taketh it from

Me, but I lay it down of Myself' (John x. 18). But when an innocent person offers himself entirely of his own accord, to suffer in the place of one who is guilty, whatever we may think of the judge's conduct in allowing such a substitution, we should scarcely charge him with injustice towards the victim thus freely offering himself. We should rather insist on the utter absurdity and futility of such a proceeding which, notwithstanding the suffering of the innocent person, must yet leave the guilt of the real criminal just as it was before, in spite of any sentimental interest with which he might be for the moment invested, in consequence of the other's suffering on his behalf.

The statement, then, that the doctrine of the Atonement represents God as unjustly punishing the innocent, is wholly untenable. Scripture, on the contrary, regards the Atonement as displaying both the Father's and the Son's love for man, at its highest degree of intensity, and under its most striking form. At the same time I am quite prepared to admit that Scripture does represent Jesus Christ as not only suffering in a general way on behalf of others, but as actually substituting Himself in the place of those for whom He suffered. He came, as He Himself said, 'to give His life

a ransom for many' (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν) (Matt. xx. 28), or as St. Paul describes it 'a ransom (ἀντίλυτρον) for all' (1 Tim. ii. 6).

And we must also most fully allow that, if Jesus Christ were a mere man like ourselves, such a substitution of Himself in the place of others would be altogether incredible. To put it as shortly as possible, if Jesus Christ were simply a man, He most unquestionably could not have done what nevertheless all Scripture is unanimous in representing Him as having done. And the only inference from this is that He cannot be the mere man which the objectors to the Atonement usually assume Him to be. What His real nature was and is I propose to set forth in the next chapter, as nearly as possible in the very words of Scripture.

CHAPTER II.

THE SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN.

‘IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men’ (John i. 1-4). Now in these opening words of St. John’s Gospel there is an evident allusion to the first words in the Book of Genesis, ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ (Gen. i. 1). And in this same beginning, says the Apostle, from which creation and time itself dates, the Word, the Son of God, already was, and was with God, and was God. And not only was He before all created things, but it was to Him, as the mediating agent and efficient, though not absolutely originating, cause, that all created things owed their existence. And amongst these created things

we must most certainly include man himself, the head and crown of creation, to which all the rest of creation, at least in this world of ours, gradually slopes upwards until it finds its truest expression and representative in man, man made in the very image and likeness of God Himself, and so in the image and likeness of Him who is Himself 'the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (or hold together) (Col. i. 15, 17). As all creation came into being through Him, so it is all on its way to Him again. He is the beginning and the end of it all. And from its first coming into existence until its final winding up (at least in this its present mode of existence) the whole of this vast system of creation, visible and invisible, material and spiritual, holds together and subsists in Him. Besides being the beginning and the end He is also the centre, and bond, and stay of it all. He upholds not only the so-called laws of nature, but also those far higher, because spiritual, laws

through which He exhibits Himself as the light and life of all, the light and life of the souls no less than the bodies of men.

And all this closeness of relation which exists between Him and the whole sphere of creation, so far from being diminished or relaxed by His becoming man was, on the contrary, drawn tighter and closer by this very act. In becoming the Son of Man, the Son of God, though for a while He laid aside the dignity of position which was His by right, did not lay aside the Divine nature which constituted the very essence of His being, in which His personality resided, and in which He had hitherto worked and still continued to work amongst those whom His own hands had made, and whom He now came to save. Only to the method of working which He had carried on previously to His Incarnation, He now superadded another. From being the beginning and the end, the head and centre of all creation, He now assumed the same relation over again, within a narrower circle but in an intenser and closer degree, to those among whom He came, and whose nature He assumed.

Whilst again from man, who forms the first and more immediate object of His redeeming work, the

same process of restoration is to extend itself, step by step, through each department of creation, until the outer circle of all is at last reached. 'For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him all the fulness (of the Father's own power) should dwell ; and through Him to reconcile all things (not simply man) to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross ; through Him I say, whether things on earth or things in Heaven' (Col. i. 19, 20). 'According to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Him, unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times ; to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth' (Eph. i. 10). And so His first work of creation is to find its counterpart and full complement in His still greater work, which is even now being carried on, of redemption.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

THE effect of the Atonement is described in Scripture as consisting in the forgiveness of sins. 'I delivered unto you,' St. Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 3), 'first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' 'Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' writes St. Peter (1 Peter ii. 24). 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son,' writes St. John (1 John i. 7), 'cleanseth us from all sin.' And our Lord Himself said to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, 'This is My blood of the New Testament (covenant), which is being shed for many for the remission of sins' (Matt. xxvi. 27).

Not but that Jesus Christ had already before His death exercised the power which as Son of Man He had received from the Father, of forgiving sins : 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are

forgiven thee' (Matt. ix. 2). 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much' (Luke vii. 47).

And this ought to be sufficient to prevent us from ascribing the blessings procured for us by Jesus Christ to any one event exclusively in His earthly history. It ought to teach us to regard His death as no mere isolated phenomenon to be viewed simply in itself, but as a link, and however important an one, yet only a link in the great chain of events which led up to it or followed after it, as the culmination and crown of a life given up from the first to self-denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of those whom He came to save.

Our Lord's death may be regarded by us in two different lights, as affecting first Himself, and secondly, the whole human race.

As regarded Himself, Scripture plainly intimates that His sufferings and death were essential to the full perfection of that human nature which He had assumed to Himself. 'For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*' (Heb. ii. 10). 'Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the

things which He suffered ; and *having been made perfect,* &c. (Heb. v. 8, 9). As this, however, is a point only slightly touched on in Scripture, we will at once pass on to that view of our Lord's death with which we ourselves are most nearly concerned.

And first, then, we may look upon it in the light of a voluntary submission on His part to an universal law of our common nature. There was, indeed, no necessity imposed upon Him to die. The divine power which dwelt in Him would have enabled Him always to bid defiance to death. But though there was no necessity that He should die so far as He Himself was concerned, the great work which He came into the world to do would have been left incomplete in many respects if He had not died. Had He gone back into heaven without first dying He would, to say the least of it, have left the darkest and most distressing problem of our nature unsolved. Death would still to all appearance present itself to us as the end of all things ; whereas by submitting to death, a death followed in turn by His resurrection from the dead, He has proved to us that death is not the end which it appears to be. By Himself passing through the grave and gate of death, He has left it open for us to follow Him.

But, again, Jesus Christ not only submitted Himself to death as the natural end of human life, but He also submitted Himself to a premature and violent death, and under the most humiliating circumstances by which it could be surrounded. He died at the very hands of those whom He had come into the world to save, and in doing so He brought out into the strongest possible relief their wickedness and hatred to all goodness as exemplified in His own person, and at the same time He exhibited the strongest possible proof of His own love for men by persisting in His self-sacrifice for them in spite of their behaviour towards Him. Thus much, then, may be said in explanation of our Lord's death, even on the most superficial view that can be taken of it. But Scripture not only bids us regard our Lord as submitting Himself to death viewed in the light of a condition and law of the nature which He had assumed to Himself, or in that again of a means of bringing out into the strongest possible relief man's wickedness and His own love for man in spite of it, but it also and most especially represents Him as submitting Himself to death in its character of the appointed wages and penalty of sin.

This, indeed, is the characteristic light in which

death is uniformly regarded by the Scriptures alike of the Old and the New Testament. How much besides the dissolution of the partnership between body and soul, and the return into dust of the former, is implied by the word death regarded in this aspect, we need not now stop to enquire. It is enough for our present purpose to say that death is looked upon in Scripture as the symbol and quasi sacrament of sin. And it was to death, in this especial meaning of the word, that Jesus Christ submitted Himself; not that it was necessary for Him even as man so to die, for He carried within Himself no taint of that terrible infection which could have enabled death in this sense of the word to claim Him as its victim. So that in the very act of submitting Himself to death as the wages and penalty of sin, He openly exhibited Himself in the act of suffering for sins not His own, but rather every one's else but His. And, further, He exhibited Himself as thus suffering in the human body and soul which He had taken to Himself, and which was all of Him that could thus suffer, for regarded simply in His divine nature neither sin nor death could come near Him.

We have, indeed, to acknowledge that we are here dealing with a mystery which we cannot hope

fully to comprehend. If ever the Atonement is to be read quite plainly, it will be in the clear full light of the Fall. Upon this last subject, however, I will simply say that Scripture distinctly represents it to us as in a great measure at least owing to the agency of the Evil One. And this same evil agency is distinctly traceable in more than one passage of our Lord's earthly history. As He stood upon the threshold of His ministry, the Evil One thrice attempted to turn Him away from the great work to which He was about to devote Himself; and, on being repulsed, the Tempter left Him indeed, but only 'for a season.' And, from the outskirts of his dominion, which he had been forced to abandon, he betook himself to his last stronghold of all, and there awaited the coming of his great antagonist, in the hope of being able to take advantage of the extreme exhaustion to which His suffering on the cross must needs reduce Him. Nor was his great opponent any the less aware on His part of the awful crisis that was in reserve for Him. All through His ministry it appears to have hung like a dark cloud over Him, and to have descended more and more closely upon Him, until at last it wrapped Him within its folds. 'I have a baptism,' He cried, 'to be baptized with;

and how am I straitened until it be accomplished' (Luke xii. 50). 'Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour' (John xii. 27). And still more distinctly, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me' (John xiv. 30). 'Now is the judgment (*κρίσις*) of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (John xii. 31).

'This is your hour, and the power of darkness,' were His words (Luke xxii. 53) as He stood looking down upon the abyss into which He was on the point of descending. And it is indeed a dark and mysterious scene which here opens before us. We can only discern faint signs of a great struggle which then began to take place between the two great powers of good and evil. It was a struggle for life and death between them, and the fate of all mankind, nay, of the whole universe, hung upon the issue of it; and for the moment, as signified by the three hours of darkness which overshadowed the land, the Prince of Darkness appeared to be getting the upper hand in it.

Much, too much, perhaps, has been made of the cry which was wrung from our Lord's lips towards the close of His sufferings on the cross, 'My God,

My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' as though for awhile He had actually felt Himself deprived of His Father's presence. Such an interpretation, however, is scarcely reconcilable with the words which He had spoken to His disciples not very long before, 'Ye shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me' (John xvi. 32). It seems far more natural to take this cry of our Lord as a reference to the twenty-second Psalm, of which it is the heading, and which we may venture to conceive of as passing, verse by verse, through His mind as He hung upon the cross. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? and art so far from helping me, and from the words of my complaint? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season I am not silent. But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee: and Thou didst deliver them. . . . But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, if He will have him. . . . They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ramping

and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. . . . They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they stand staring and looking upon me.' And may we not also add, as part of the same train of thought which passed through the mind of the great sufferer, the concluding words of the same Psalm: 'I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. . . . He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard him. . . . All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the earth shall worship before Him.' Thus, even in the very depth of His sufferings He doubtless saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.

I have already remarked that the meaning of the cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' must be reconcilable with the words spoken shortly before to His disciples, 'I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.' And no less must they be reconcilable with the last cry of all, which shortly afterwards burst from His lips, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' (Luke xxiii. 46), again a quotation from one of the Psalms (Ps.

xxxi. 5), only with the most significant addition of the word 'Father.'

What has been just said, however little light it may throw on the real character of the Atonement, may at least help to explain to us why it is so closely associated in Scripture with our Lord's death. For His death was emphatically the scene of His great struggle with sin in the person of the Evil One. Through death He overthrew and brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. ii. 14). He stripped off and put away¹ the principalities and powers of evil, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross' (Col. ii. 15). He died indeed and left it for us to die after Him, but in the very act of dying He extracted the sting from death, and left it henceforth half dead itself and quite powerless to harm us. Death is no longer the stronghold of sin that it used to be. It is now a dismantled fortress, and terrible in appearance only. For by conquering it for Himself Jesus Christ has conquered it for us also. As Son of Man, not merely Son of Mary, or Son of David, or Son of Abraham, each of which titles would have confined His relationship to some individual, or family, or race

¹ See Bishop Lightfoot's note on this passage.

amongst men, but as Son of Man, and so related equally to all men, He died for all, and conquered death and sin for all.

And so the work which, as Son of God, He had commenced at our creation, was again taken up and carried a step forwards by Him in His new character of Son of Man, under which He accomplished our redemption.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST RISEN.

I HAVE already remarked that it is impossible to arrive at the full meaning of any one event in our Lord's earthly history without viewing it in connection with the events which led up to it and those which followed after it. And, as regards our Lord's death, those events which followed upon it are still more important and significant than those which preceded it. The event immediately following upon our Lord's death was the descent of His, for the time, disembodied Spirit into the world of the dead. 'Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit; in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah' (1 Pet. iii 18-20). And again, 'for this cause was the Gospel preached, even unto the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit' (1 Pet. iv. 6).

The above passages are confessedly very difficult of interpretation. I simply offer what appears to me to be the correct explanation of them, leaving it to every one to form his own judgment upon it¹.

The Apostle then appears to intimate that in the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection His Spirit went where all the dead of all ages had gone and were gathered together before Him. And amongst all this vast multitude special mention is made of those who, from the extreme remoteness of their life on earth and the peculiar circumstances under which they had died, appeared to be the furthest removed from all hope of salvation. They had refused to listen to the great preacher of righteousness in their day, and had in consequence been suddenly swept away by the waters of the flood, in the midst of their unbelief and impenitence. Yet even to these souls Christ came and

¹ See Karlake, 'Intimation of Holy Scripture as to the state of Man after Death,' Lecture IV; Farrar, 'Early Days of Christianity,' page 94 (popular edition); Dorner, 'System of Christian Doctrine,' iv. 127 (English translation); Dean Plumptre, 'The Spirits in Prison.' The following is the third of the Articles of 1552: 'As Christ died and was buried for us, so also it is to be believed that He went down into Hell. For the body lay in the sepulchre until the resurrection; but His ghost departing from Him was with the ghosts that were in prison or in Hell; and did preach to the same; as the place of S. Peter doth testify.'

announced to them the way of salvation which had just been laid open by His death, that they too might, if they willed it, become sharers in the blessings then procured for all men.

This, then, it would appear, was the immediate result of our Saviour's death. 'He died that He might be Lord of the dead, as He rose again that He might be Lord of the living' (Rom. xiv. 9). At the same time, whatever may be the correct explanation of the above two passages in St. Peter's first Epistle, the descent of our Lord's Spirit into Hades is so slightly touched on in Scripture that I pass on at once to the event which is always represented as most closely connected with His death, and that is His rising again from the dead no more to see corruption. And here I scarcely need say that in speaking of our Lord's resurrection I speak of it as including His ascension into heaven as the natural consequence of it, and connected with it by the forty days of transition state between these two events, during which He occasionally 'manifested' Himself to His disciples.

It may perhaps appear that, in thus passing on from the subject of our Lord's death to that of His resurrection, we are leaving the subject of the Atonement behind us, accomplished as that was,

once for all, by His death on the cross. On the other hand, however, Scripture distinctly represents our Lord's sufferings as dependent for their efficacy on His resurrection, as though this final token of His victory over sin and death were needed in order to affix the divine seal and final ratification to the Atonement. 'For,' as St. Paul argues, 'if Christ be not raised, your faith in Him is in vain; ye are yet in your sins' (1 Cor. xv. 17), those very sins from which the Atonement was made to free us. Elsewhere again the same Apostle speaks of Christ as delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification' (Rom. iv. 25). Somewhat similarly he argues, 'if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life' (Rom. v. 10). From which passages we may see how impossible it is to fully estimate the value of Christ's death without at the same time taking into account the still greater blessings which resulted from His resurrection, when He entered upon an entirely new kind of life, with the body and soul in which He had been tempted and had suffered free henceforth and for ever from all liability to temptation and suffering, with His whole human nature raised into complete harmony

with the Divine nature which had all along dwelt in it. And not only so, but He also as Son of Man entered at His resurrection upon a far wider field of operation than had lain within His reach during His earthly ministry, henceforth drawing all men within the loving embrace of those arms which had been stretched out above them upon the cross.

And as the crowning act of His earthly life, summed up and terminated in His death, had been the great work of Atonement, so now the principal work upon which He entered at His resurrection, was that of intercession on behalf of those for whom the Atonement had been made. 'It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us' (Rom. viii. 34). Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Heb. vii. 25). Not indeed that this office was for the first time exercised by Him upon His resurrection and ascension, as may be seen from the prayer offered up by Him for His disciples, as recorded in John xvii. But though it had been exercised by Him through the whole of His earthly ministry, His work of inter-

cession may be said to have risen with Him, and to have become glorified with Him on His resurrection and ascension into Heaven.

Thus far, then, we have been engaged in contemplating our Lord working for us in our own nature indeed, and yet, so to speak, altogether outside of ourselves.

At His death He trod the winepress alone. And the very office of Intercessor requires the presence of one who, though clothed in our nature, and in all essential points like to ourselves, is yet unlike us in being holy and separate from us sinners on whose behalf He pleads. In addition, however, to His thus suffering and pleading for us externally to ourselves, Scripture also represents Him as making Himself actually one with us on whose behalf He once suffered and now pleads. Even in the days of His flesh He could describe Himself as the vine, with us for its branches, as not only the way to the Father, but also the life. At the same time it is with especial reference to that new and higher life upon which He entered at His resurrection that this language respecting Him is most especially made use of in Scripture. 'No longer I,' writes the Apostle, 'but Christ lives in me' (Gal. ii. 20). 'Ye died, and your life is hid with

Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3). 'We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ' (1 John v. 20). Similarly our Lord is spoken of as the second Adam, the true root and source of our spiritual life, even as our natural life is derived from the first Adam (1 Cor. xv. 45). In these passages, and many more might be quoted to the same effect, our salvation is spoken of as owing not so much to any external act performed by Jesus Christ on our behalf, as to an actual infusion of His life into ours, transforming us by degrees into the very image and likeness of Him by Whom we were first made and then redeemed and made over again, and Who now lives in us and takes us up, one by one, into Himself.

Again, besides being communicated to each one of us individually, this life of Christ, especially in its new and glorified form, is also represented as gathering us all together as so many members or limbs into one body with Jesus Christ Himself for its head. 'He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead' (Col. i. 18; comp. ii. 10). 'As we have many members in one body, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another' (Rom. xii. 5). And still more distinctly

the Apostle speaks of the working of God's 'mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places . . . and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all' (Eph. i. 20, 23).

And so the life *through* Christ, for which we are indebted to His death, attains its full growth and symmetry in that life of all true believers together *in* Him, for which we are chiefly indebted to His resurrection. Thus then let us learn to think of Him, not only as having once died for us, but also as now living in us and we in Him. Let us picture Him to ourselves as the head and the heart, at once human and divine, to the body of the whole human race, rejoicing with all, sorrowing with all, and caring for all; as drawing all the diseases of each separate part of the body into Himself and vanquishing them in the strength of His Divine power, and in the place of the impure blood which had been stagnating in us, infusing a fresh stream of His own warm, life-giving blood, and causing it to circulate through the whole body to its furthest extremities, 'till we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto

a full grown man . . . growing up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ' (Eph. iv. 13-15).

It is worth while our remarking here how in each of the two sacraments instituted by Christ there is a distinct reference made to each of these two relations, external and internal, in which He stands towards us.

Thus, with reference to the sacrament of baptism. 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins' (Acts ii. 38).

'In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body' (1 Cor. xii. 13).

So again with the sacrament of the Eucharist. 'This is My blood of the New Testament (covenant), which is shed for many unto remission of sins' (Matt. xxvi. 28). 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (participation) of the blood of Christ? seeing that we who are many are one bread (loaf); for we are all partakers of the one bread' (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). And again, 'We were all made to drink into one Spirit' (1 Cor. xii. 13).

There is one work reserved for Jesus Christ still in His capacity of Son of Man, when at the end of this present condition of things He will

exchange the gentle work of intercession, which He is at present exercising on our behalf, for the sterner office of judge, when in truth there will no longer be any one left on whose behalf to carry on His intercession, since all men will have risen above or sunk beneath the reach of it; and still, under cover of this solemn and awful form, we catch a glimpse of the same human and yet divine being to whom we are indebted for the work of our redemption and our new life in Him.

It is as Son of Man that 'He has' received authority to execute 'judgment' (John v. 27); 'God hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead' (Acts xvii. 31). And even when this great work has been discharged, we are not to suppose that the work of Jesus Christ as Son of Man and our Mediator with the Father is altogether to cease; for, as has been well observed¹ with reference to that obscure passage, 1 Cor. xv 24-28, 'Though He will give up the kingdom to the Father, and will lay down His office of Mediator so far as the complete cessation of sin and death will relieve Him

¹ By Bishop Martensen, 'Christliche Dogmatik,' p. 456.

from the necessity of any further exercise of it, yet He will still remain for ever the Bridegroom, the Head of the heavenly kingdom, for ever diffusing every blessing that flows from the Father over all the works of His hands. Indeed it will be then for the first time truly said of Christ that He is present everywhere in creation, when He will fill it all with His own fulness, and all will live in Him.'

CHAPTER V.

SCRIPTURE TERMS EXPRESSIVE OF ATONEMENT.

THE word Atonement has undergone some change in its meaning. In its primary sense, as indicated by the word itself, it signifies the coming together of those who have been alienated from one another. And in this, its original meaning, it is equivalent, or nearly so, to the Greek word *καταλλαγή*, which also has undergone a change of meaning, and from signifying an exchange of any kind it assumed the more specific meaning of a change out of a state of enmity into one of friendship. And in this latter sense it is used, Rom. v. 11, *δι' οὗ τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν*, rendered by our Authorised Version 'by whom we have received the Atonement.' In the Revised Version, however, the term reconciliation has been rightly substituted in the place of atonement in this passage. For the word atonement has passed out of its original meaning, and in the place of reconciliation it appears to be

now used to signify the means by which the reconciliation has been effected. The word Atonement is frequently met with in the Old Testament in this its newer and stricter meaning. It is found in about forty places in the Pentateuch. And in the original Hebrew the word commonly made use of to express it is כִּפָּר, literally 'cover'¹. Thus, for example, after the worship of the golden calf, Moses says to the people, 'Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin' (Exod. xxxii. 30).

With the exception of the one passage, Rom. v. 11, already referred to, the word Atonement is not to be met with in the English Version of the New Testament. But there are several words more or less descriptive of the work of Atonement, which the New Testament writers make use of, and especially the following:—

Sacrifice (θυσία), as in Eph. v. 2, together with the kindred words *sin* or *sin-offering* (ἁμαρτία, περὶ ἁμαρτίας), 2 Cor. v. 21; *curse* (κατάρα), Gal. iii. 13; *blood* (αἷμα), passim; *sprinkling* (ῥαντισμός), Heb. xii. 24, and 1 Pet. i. 2; *purification or clean-*

¹ For the exact meaning of this term see Dorner, 'System of Christian Doctrine,' iii. 405 (English translation).

śing (καθαρισμός), Heb. i. 3; *covenant as ratified with sacrifice* (διαθήκη), Matt. xxvi. 28; *propitiation* (ἱλασμός), 1 John ii. 2, and iv. 10; ἱλαστήριον, Rom. iii. 25 (comp. Heb. ix. 5, *mercy-seat*); *ransom* (λύτρον), Matt. xx. 28; (ἀντιλύτρον) 1 Tim. ii. 6; *redemption* (ἀπολύτρωσις), Rom. iii. 24.

Atonement under the Law was ordinarily made by means of *sacrifice* (θυσία), i. e. expiatory sacrifice as distinguished from the peace or thank-offerings (προσφυραί and δῶρα) of the Jewish ritual.

In Lev. iv, v. we have an account of the principal of these expiatory sacrifices, viz. the *sin-offering* (περὶ ἁμαρτίας, or simply ἁμαρτία). The offender, if a priest, is ordered to bring a young bullock without blemish before the Lord, and to lay his hand on the bullock, and to kill it before the Lord. And the priest is to take of the *blood* of the bullock, and to dip his finger in the blood, and to *sprinkle* it seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary. The fat and kidneys, &c. are to be burnt by the priest on the altar of burnt-offerings. The skin and flesh, &c. are to be carried forth without the camp, and there burnt. Again, in vv. 13-21, in case of an offence committed by the whole people, the same ceremony is ordered to be gone through by the elders of the people, together

with the priest ; and it is said the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven (LXX. *ἐξιλάσεται περὶ αὐτῶν ὁ ἱερεὺς, καὶ ἀφεθήσεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ἁμαρτία*). Similar sacrifices, though of an inferior order, were prescribed in the case of the offender being a private individual. Expiatory sacrifice may be said to have reached its culminating point in the ceremonies of the great day of Atonement (Heb. *יְהִי כִפּוּרִים*, LXX. *ἡμέρα ἐξιλασμοῦ*, dies expiationum, propitiationis). The ceremonies are described in Lev. xvi., comp. xxiii. 27–32, and are too well known to require a detailed enumeration of them here.

Closely connected with the expiatory sacrifice was the curse (*κατάρα*) inflicted on every one hanging on a tree, Deut. xxi. 23 (comp. Gal. iii. 13, in which passage it is plainly regarded in the light of an expiation).

Besides the sacrifice as a means of expiation, in the stricter sense of the term, we also find mention made, both in the Old and New Testament, of sacrifice as a sign of ratification of the covenant made between God and His people. Thus we read in Ex. xxiv. 5–8 of Moses sending ‘young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings unto the

Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basons, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. . . . And he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you¹. With this we may compare Matt. xxvi. 28, 'This is My blood of the New Testament (covenant), which is shed for you for the remission of sins,' a covenant which had been long before promised through the prophet Jeremiah (xxx. 32-34), together with the forgiveness of sins ('For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more').

Besides the atonement effected in the shape of sacrifice, we also have instances in the Old Testament of its being effected in the shape of a payment in money. Thus in Ex. xxx. 11, &c. we read that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, they shall give every man a ransom (or atonement) (Heb. כֶּפֶר, LXX. λύτρα) for his soul (or life), when thou numberest. . . . They shall give half a shekel for an offering unto the Lord, to make atonement for your souls.' And in Lev. xxv. 51 the same Greek word, λύτρον, is used in the

¹ For other examples of a covenant sacrifice in the Old Testament, see Genesis xv. and Psalm l. 5.

LXX. to signify the redemption of a slave, though, in the place of the ordinary Hebrew word פָּקַד, we have here the word גָּאֹלָה, from גָּאֹל, to redeem. (This signification, it may be remarked, must not be confounded with the sense of avenging, which the same word elsewhere bears, though in some places it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. Thus in the well-known passage of Job xix. 25, the word redeemer is given in the text, but in the margin of the Revised Version we have vindicator.) The same Greek word, though with a different Hebrew word, is used (Ex. xxxiv. 20) to signify the redemption of the first-born of the Israelites. Now this redemption of the first-born is expressly grounded on the deliverance of the first-born of the Israelites at the infliction of the last plague on the Egyptians. The Israelites were on that occasion ordered to sprinkle the blood of the Paschal lamb on the sideposts and lintels of their doors, that the destroying angel might pass over without smiting them. So that the Passover appears to have combined the notion of sacrifice (blood) with that of ransom (comp. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19). Thus we read in Ex. xii. 26, 27, 'It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? that ye shall say unto

them, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' And this deliverance is elsewhere referred to under the name of redemption (*ἀπολύτρωσις*), e.g. in Deut. vii. 8. It can scarcely be doubted that it was with especial reference to the Paschal lamb that John the Baptist pointed to our Lord as 'the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.'

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, besides the reference to the ceremonies made use of on the great day of Atonement, there is also an allusion to the ashes of the red heifer 'sprinkling the unclean,' which, together with 'the blood of bulls and goats, sanctifieth unto the cleanness of the flesh' (Heb. ix. 13). And in Num. xix. 9, these ashes are described as 'a water of separation' (margin, Rev. Ver. impurity), 'it is a sin-offering.'

The above comprise some of the principal passages in which the words, used in the New Testament with a reference to the atoning work of Christ, are found in the Old Testament.

Other more remote allusions, as in the brazen serpent (John iii. 14), it is unnecessary here to enter upon.

There is, however, one word which it may be worth while to notice on account of its frequent use in later ages, though it is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The word satisfaction appears to have been first made use of by Tertullian, not, however, in the sense which it afterwards came to bear, but in that of the amends made by a man for himself through means of his own confession and repentance; whereas from the time of St. Anselm it was used to signify the amends made by Jesus Christ on our behalf. For further details of the history and meaning of this word, I may refer to Hagenbach, '*History of Doctrines*,' ii. 32; Oxenham, '*Catholic Doctrine of the Atonement*,' 184; and Archbishop Thomson, '*Bampton Lectures*,' p. 166.

CHAPTER VI.

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE.

THE number and variety of expressions which, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, Scripture makes use of to describe the Atonement, has somewhat the effect of preventing our minds from resting exclusively, or for long together, on any one of them; and that this was actually intended to be the effect may be gathered from a separate examination of these expressions, when it will be seen that the notion intended to be conveyed by each of them is a very limited one, and that the figure under which it is conveyed will not bear pressing too closely.

By way of illustrating this remark, I will take first a term expressive of the Atonement made use of by our Lord Himself, as also by one of His apostles, the word ransom. Now a ransom, it may be argued, implies three parties to it; first, the one which pays it; secondly, that on whose behalf it is

paid ; and, thirdly, and lastly, the party to whom it is paid. And, as applied to the Atonement, we have no difficulty in making out the application of the figure before us as regards two of the parties. Jesus Christ describes Himself as the payer of the ransom, and 'the many,' or, according to the apostle, 'all,' constitute the party on whose behalf it is paid. But who constitutes the third party to whom the ransom is paid? On the supposition, then, that the figure is to be thoroughly carried out, we are bound, it would appear, to make answer that it was either God or the Devil, a dilemma which will involve us in insuperable difficulties, whichever of the two alternative answers we prefer. If we speak of the ransom as paid by way of amends to the outraged justice and majesty of God, we find ourselves confronted with such passages of Scripture as the following: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John iii. 16). 'Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John iv 9, 10). 'God com-

mendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ' (Rom. v. 8). If, on the other hand, we make answer that this ransom was paid to the Devil as the price of our deliverance from the bondage to him into which our sins had reduced us, still the question remains, how are we to suppose that the Devil on His own part would consent to become a party to an agreement by which he himself would be such a great loser? And to this the only answer that appears to suggest itself is, that he was not aware at the time that he would be a loser; in other words, he was deceived, or allowed to deceive himself into a belief that he would be a gainer by it and not a loser. Of course, we shall at once say, that this is a most monstrous conclusion at which to arrive. And I most fully allow it to be so. At the same time, it is the simple result of carrying out the figure before us to its logical consequences; nay more, it is the result actually arrived at by some of the most eminent fathers¹ of the Christian Church; and it was generally accepted in the Church for nearly a thousand years, until it was supplanted or succeeded in the eleventh century

¹ See Oxenham, 'The Catholic Doctrine of the Atonement,' p. 143, &c.

by the well-known 'satisfaction' theory of St. Anselm.

Now surely this example of the abuse made of one scriptural term expressive of the Atonement, ought to be sufficient to put us on our guard against making or allowing a similar abuse to be made of any other term used for the same purpose. We must recollect that heavenly and spiritual truths cannot be conveyed to us in the very language of heaven. We could not understand them in the least if they were offered to us in such a shape. They must be brought down to our own level, and accommodated to our, at present, feeble powers of comprehension. They must be made known to us by means of their nearest earthly and material representatives, which of course must of necessity fall far short of the heavenly realities themselves. For we see only through a glass darkly, we know in part, and in part alone. And so, in accepting these earthly representations of the higher truths they stand for, we must accept them on the distinct understanding that they are not to be pressed beyond the meaning which was intended when they were spoken or written. And to extend them beyond this their intended meaning, is to go far towards depriving them of all

meaning. It is to confound the meaning which they were meant to convey, with that which was meant to be kept in the background, and so to mix up error with the very truth itself.

This is so very important a subject that I may be excused if I enter upon it somewhat more in detail.

'I,' says our Blessed Lord, 'am the true vine,' ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ (John xv. 1). Now, in this instance, the general dissimilarity between the two objects thus compared is so great, as to restrain us from pressing the comparison too closely. Every one sees that it is the close union subsisting between the stock and the branches of the vine, and the thorough dependence of the latter on the former which our Lord insists on, as setting forth the still closer relation subsisting between Himself and us. All that the vine is to the branches, so much and still more He is to us. But, in stopping short at this point of the comparison, do we in any way detract from the truth which He intends to convey to us; do we honour Him the less by declining to pursue the comparison further? And in applying the name vine to Christ do we not act as He would have us act when we apply it to Him in a spiritual and heavenly sense, and not in a material and earthly one? In the language of logicians

the term vine, as here employed, is not to be regarded by us as an univocal term, and as such possessed of only one meaning. Neither, on the other hand, can we regard it as an equivocal term, with its different meanings unconnected with each other, but it is an analogous term expressive of a sameness of relation between a tree and its branches on the one hand, and Christ and His people on the other hand¹.

And now let us turn to the following passage from Heb. viii: 'We have such an high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle (*τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς*), which the Lord pitched, and not man.' Here, again, we have the word true (*ἀληθινή*). And yet whatever may be the correspondence between the divine reality and its earthly counterpart, no one would dream of conceiving of the former as consisting of a tabernacle or tent in the ordinary

¹ Strictly speaking, analogy means the resemblance not of things but of ratios. And the example of 'vine' just referred to, is an instance of analogy in this its strictest sense. At the same time the word analogous is commonly used in a somewhat wider sense than its meaning would strictly warrant. Mill (*Logic*, i. 47) defines analogous as a name predicated of two things not univocally or exactly in the same signification, but in significations somewhat similar and derived one from the other.

sense of the term. And the sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, is again obviously a description of the same character with the word tabernacle. All, indeed, that can be conceived in the way of dignity and authority is here ascribed to Jesus Christ, whom however no one imagines to be actually seated at the right hand of One whom we are told to believe in as a Spirit, and therefore devoid of body and parts such as we have.

In each then of the above examples, vine, tabernacle, sitting at the right hand, &c., there is doubtless a reality far exceeding anything we can conceive, to which each of these expressions point, and which is signified by the word true, which is applied to two of them, but there is at the same time a vast difference between them, which must always prevent us from regarding them as identical.

And now from these preliminary remarks we pass on to the word which is most frequently made use of in Scripture as descriptive of the Atonement, the word sacrifice, including the words blood, sprinkling, purification, &c., closely connected with it.

As to the first origin of sacrifice Scripture is altogether silent. The question whether it was in the first instance of Divine institution will probably remain

unanswered to the end of time. The very fact, however, of its being left in obscurity, seems to imply that the question is not a very important one; and it is at least conceivable that the idea of sacrifice was in the first instance the spontaneous growth of the human heart, the result of an instinctive yearning on the part of man after communion with his Creator.

Sacrifices may be divided into two classes, thank-offerings and expiatory sacrifices. The thank-offering was a simple acknowledgment on man's part of the homage he owed to his Maker, and of his entire dependence on Him for everything he had, a symbolical giving back to God out of the good things which he had received at His hands. These offerings implied no sense of sin in the offerer, and they might have been offered in Paradise before the Fall. They were incorporated into the Jewish ritual in the form of thank-offerings or peace-offerings. And they are again recognised by the New Testament writers in the shape of praise and good deeds, and, above all, in the dedication of our whole selves body and soul to the service of God. Now here, again, as in the instances already cited, though perhaps not so distinctly perceptible as in them, there is a distinction as well as a likeness

between the Jewish offering of fine flour, &c., and the sacrifice of our own souls and bodies (Rom. xii. i), a distinction recognised by the apostle in his very description of the latter as a 'living sacrifice.' And the same distinction is recognised by St. Peter when he bestows the name of 'spiritual' on such kinds of sacrifice (1 Pet. ii. 5); so that the relation between these and the thank-offerings prescribed by the Jewish law, must be described as one of analogy not of identity. Yet this, so far from throwing any discredit on the Christian's offering of himself, only tends to elevate it from the lower grade of the Jewish ritual into the 'reasonable service' spoken of by St. Paul.

It is, however, with the second kind of sacrifice, viz. the expiatory, that we have here to do. Now these in their first origin were an open acknowledgment on the part of the offerer of his estrangement from his Maker, and at the same time a striving after reconciliation with Him. They were an inarticulate cry for deliverance from the state of bondage to sin into which man had been brought, and from which he felt his own inability to deliver himself. And the universality of this longing on man's part is attested by the fact that expiatory sacrifice formed an essential part of worship in the

various religions of the Gentile world no less than in that of the Jews. And in both it ordinarily took the form of offering up some animal, the life of which was looked upon as symbolical of the life of him by whom and in whose place it was offered. Again, the higher the kind of life so offered, so much the closer was the representation of the life in whose place it was offered. So that, according to the almost universal custom of antiquity, expiatory sacrifice took the shape, on particular occasions at least, of human offerings, at once the highest and the most degraded means of expiation, and one which sought at times to obtrude itself even upon the chosen people.

It is a much debated question whether expiatory sacrifice formed part of the Jewish ritual as instituted by Moses. It is certain that the prophet represents God as saying to the Jews, 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices: but this commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people' (Jer. vii. 22, 23). And the comparatively low estimation in which these sacrifices were held by the more spiritually minded part of the Jewish

people may be seen in the Psalmist's declaration, 'Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required' (Ps. xl. 6). 'The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit : a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (Ps. li. 17). But now how are we to explain these last words of the Psalmist? Are we to look upon a broken and contrite spirit as indeed a sacrifice in the same sense in which the offering of a bullock at the altar was so? Surely not. Surely here, again, as in the case of the thank-offering and its higher representative, the relation between the sacrifice of the beast before the altar and that of a broken heart before God is one of analogy, and not of actual identity.

And this leads us on to the consideration of the one great sacrifice which was offered up for us upon the cross. How far then is this to be accounted a sacrifice in the literal and ordinary acceptation of the term? And here let it be most plainly understood that I am not in the least calling in question the great value of Jesus Christ's death and of the benefits which have been secured by it. Most unquestionably all that the sacrifices of either the Jewish or Gentile world ever aimed at or symbolised, all that the heart of man ever

longed for in offering up these sacrifices, was most fully accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. He died for all. He exposed the human nature which He had assumed to the brunt of His great adversary's attack, and in the weakness of His human nature He sank beneath it, though only to rise again from it in the strength of His Divine power. And in this sense, therefore, His death was undoubtedly a sacrifice, nay, the only true sacrifice that ever was or ever can be offered. This, however, is not the precise answer to the question of which we are now in search. The question here is, was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ a sacrifice in the ordinary sense of the word? And to this we can only return a negative answer. It was indeed a true sacrifice, just in the same sense in which the sacrifice of ourselves is a true thank-offering, and in which Jesus Christ describes Himself as the true vine, and in which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the true tabernacle. In a word, the term sacrifice, as applied to our Lord's death, is an analogous term, not a term expressive of actual identity with the sacrifices offered on the Jewish altar.

It will perhaps, however, here be asked, if our Lord's death was not a sacrifice, strictly speaking,

how comes it to be so repeatedly described as a sacrifice in the language of Scripture? Now to answer this question we must consider the class of persons to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first instance. They were all of them; whether Jew or Gentile, thoroughly acquainted with both the theory and practice of expiatory sacrifice. This kind of sacrifice formed an essential and principal feature of their religion. It intertwined itself with their daily life. It was the nearest approach they could make to the true worship. And what is true generally of all those for whose immediate benefit the Scriptures of the New Testament were written is most emphatically true of the recent converts from Judaism to Christianity, still in heart clinging to the ancient ceremonies amongst which they had been brought up. To this class of people the Epistle to the Hebrews, which most especially dwells on the sacrificial aspect of Christ's death, was exclusively addressed. Yet even the author of this Epistle, himself too a convert of no long standing from Judaism, could speak of the law, which was intended to bring them thus far on their way to Christ, as but a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of those things; as in fact at two removes distant from the realities

which it prefigured. Allowing then fully the usefulness and even the necessity, at the time, of such language as we find made use of in that Epistle, and to a less extent also in other books of the New Testament, yet it is a language uttered as it were under protest, and accompanied with a full acknowledgment of its incompleteness and temporary character. And may not we then who have been brought up outside of the pale of the Jewish law, out of sight and hearing of the temple sacrifices, be permitted to learn about Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, from the simpler and yet fuller language which also is provided for us in the Gospel, such as that of His dying for us to save us from our sins, without being compelled to go on approaching Him, as it were, through the circuitous and tedious avenue of the ceremonial law?

If indeed it helps us to a clearer view of the Atonement to regard it in the light of an expiatory sacrifice, we have doubtless full Scripture authority for doing so. Only to understand what we are reading we must place ourselves for the time in the position actually occupied by those to whom this sacrificial language was a kind of mother tongue, whereas to us it is a comparatively foreign language.

We have now looked separately into the meaning of the two principal terms made use of in Scripture to describe the character of the Atonement, the terms ransom and sacrifice. And if now we compare these two terms together, and, dismissing those points in which they differ from each other, retain the one or more points in which they agree with one another, we may hope to approximate to an understanding of the real nature of the Atonement. The one point then in which ransom and sacrifice agree (to which may be added the word curse, as referred to in Gal. iii. 13), is the notion of substitution of some thing or person in the place of another. And this then would appear to be the real character of the Atonement, in so far as these words help to explain it to us.

Still, ponder it and define it as we may, the Atonement will always remain an inexhaustible mine for us to work in. It is the deepest mystery of all the many mysteries of the Incarnation. The Incarnation, including in this the birth and life and death and resurrection and ascension into heaven of our Blessed Saviour, forms a string of richest and rarest jewels, and the central jewel and costliest of them all is the Atonement. It is like a diamond flashing out light, now from this one and now from

that one of its many facets, accordingly as we approach it from this side or that, or as we turn it over in our hand. And yet neither the light which flashes from it, nor all its many facets taken together, constitute the diamond.

I commenced this chapter with remarking upon the number and variety of expressions which are made use of in Scripture to describe the nature of the Atonement. And now, in conclusion, let us take all these expressions, together with all others which are found in Scripture descriptive generally of our Lord's life and work, and let us notice how they arrange themselves into a kind of gradually ascending series, mounting upwards, step by step, from the earth whence they derive their origin, towards the heaven whither they help to lift us, some of them busying themselves more with the outward accompaniments and lesser details, and others with the more real and essential features of the great character which they combine to portray.

Perhaps the one word which most completely sums up and expresses the relation in which Jesus Christ stands towards us is the word Mediator. By partaking fully of each nature, Divine and human, He occupies the place of God towards us

and of man towards God ; a position which He alone of all beings, created or uncreated, is competent to occupy. He stands for ever as the one open door between Heaven and earth, not, however, as a mere passive medium of communication between the two, for in His person God is for ever descending out of Heaven upon the earth, and man is being lifted up into the presence of God in Heaven. There is but one name, if possible still higher and dearer to us, under which to conceive of Him and by which to address Him, and that is the name Saviour by which He was first announced, and which He has ever since borne amongst us. 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus ; for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matt. i. 21).

CHAPTER VII.

VICARIOUS SUFFERING.

IF we regard the subject now before us as a mere abstract question of right and wrong, we shall feel compelled to say that no one ought to be made to suffer except in the way of consequence of what he himself has done or neglected to do; that each person ought to bear his own load of suffering which he has brought upon himself, and that alone. And yet how very far is this from being actually the case. Not to speak of pain intentionally inflicted by one person on another, we are all of us constantly suffering, indirectly at least, through the agency or instrumentality of others. We suffer even at the sight of others' sufferings, much more owing to what they do or omit to do. And they in like manner suffer in exactly the same way at our hands. We are all of us always contributing to the main stream of human suffering, from which both we and they alike are forced to drink. Again, besides this continued overflow and interchange of

suffering, we also see occasional instances still more at variance with our notions of what ought to be. We see cases of a positive diversion of suffering, when the guilty are allowed, for the time at least, to escape unpunished, and some quite innocent person is visited with the consequences of their guilt. This suffering on the part of the innocent person may be and often is quite involuntary, and in such a case he is simply an object for our pity; though in proportion to the readiness and patience with which he submits to it, the more we are moved to sympathy and admiration at the sight of his suffering, and most of all so when he not only readily stoops to the burden which is being laid upon him, but freely of his own accord goes forward to meet it.

And now let us ask how far a resemblance is traceable between the sufferings which one man may and occasionally does undergo in the place of or for another, and those which Jesus Christ is represented in Scripture as having undergone for us.

As far, then, as outward appearances go, the resemblance in some instances is very striking. Men have been known to give themselves up to all kinds of suffering and to death itself for the sake of their fellow-men, or to uphold some cause which they

felt to be right. And that in so behaving they have really in some way resembled Jesus Christ in His sufferings, we have the authority of Scripture itself for affirming. As the beloved disciple writes, 'As He laid down His life for us, so ought we to lay down our lives for the brethren' (1 John iii. 16). And St. Paul argues, 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man (or that which is good) some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. v. 7, 8). Still, with all the resemblance between the two cases, there are also some important points of difference for us to notice. And first it is ordinarily some one exceptional act of self-sacrifice which a man exerts himself to perform on behalf of others. And in the highest instances of all, such as that of death voluntarily submitted to for the purpose of rescuing others, the act is generally the result of a momentary inspiration or a sudden flash of courage, rather than, as in Jesus Christ's case, the crowning act of a whole life devoted incessantly in the same spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice to the good of others. Then, again, the self-devotion of the hero, however noble in itself, is yet in most instances tainted strongly with

egoism, and with the desire of renown and admiration which his self-devotion is certain to procure for him. But how unlike is all this to the meek and lowly spirit of Him who stooped to the very lowest depth of degradation to which it was possible for His enemies to consign Him, and submitted to die a felon's death in its most ignominious shape. Then, again, most of those to whom we have been referring died to save their friend or their country from some overwhelming temporal disaster. Or if in some instances men have given themselves up to all kind of suffering in the hope of being thus made instrumental to the spiritual as well as temporal welfare of their fellow-men, yet there is one thing which they never even dreamed of being able to accomplish by means of their sufferings, and that is the actual forgiveness of other men's sins and the salvation of their souls. 'No man may redeem his brother, or give a ransom unto God for him,' is the language alike of Scripture and of human justice and reason. What, however, no mere man could do or even dream of doing, all Scripture combines in representing Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a bodily form, as both capable of doing and actually doing, by Himself suffering in our stead.

We have, indeed, no plummet with which to sound the depth of our Saviour's sufferings, nor are we able to define the precise manner in which they were available for the remission of our sins. That is a secret which we must be content to leave, for the present at least, in the divine keeping; and where else could it be better lodged? At the same time there are, in conclusion, one or two general considerations which may tend to relieve the subject of some of its difficulties.

And first, when we make mention of our Lord's sufferings, we are not to think of them to the exclusion of His active exertion at the same time on our behalf. According to the nearest view which we are permitted to take of them, they consisted in great part at least of a direct personal encounter with evil in its most aggravated and concentrated form, such as must have called into exercise and strained to the very utmost all the powers of that human nature in which He sustained the conflict, and in the very act of suffering from it, nay, it may be said, by the very means of His so suffering, came out the conqueror.

A second consideration is suggested by the divine, as the first was rather by the human nature of the great sufferer. It was through Him as the

eternal Son of God that we and all things in heaven or earth were made. And what then is there to hinder Him from restoring that which His own hands had made, and from setting up again the image of the Creator in which He at first fashioned us, but which has unhappily been since thrown down? In a word, why should not His first work in creating us be carried one step further by His redemption of us?

And lastly, we have to consider that the sins from which we have so suffered, and which were the occasion of our Saviour's suffering for us, are of an essentially alien nature to us. Our own consciousness as we keep on struggling, however in vain, against them, bears witness that they form no real part of our proper selves. It is an enemy that hath done this. And may not the work of our bitterest enemy be counteracted and reversed by our dearest friend? Shall not He to whom we of right belong be permitted to deliver us from the foreign power which has usurped God's own place in us?

And so, in short, the question, Can I regard the Scripture doctrine of the Atonement as credible? simply resolves itself into this further question, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?



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